

U.S. Congressman Allen Boyd (D-North Florida) today helped pass a landmark piece of legislation that for the first time provides vital support and assistance to caregivers that tend to our nation's veterans, particularly critically wounded servicemen and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (S.1963) passed in the House of Representatives today by a vote of 419 - 0.

"It is our duty to ensure that the brave men and women who have risked everything to protect our freedom know that they will be protected and cared for when returning home from service," said Congressman Boyd. "Over the past few years we have taken significant steps to honor the courage and bravery of our troops. Today's action builds on this commitment by recognizing the tremendous sacrifices made by our veterans as well as their families and friends. This legislation extends much needed and long overdue support and assistance to veterans' caregivers, and I am extremely proud to lend my support to this effort."

It is estimated that 21 percent of active duty, 15 percent of reserve component, and 24 percent of retired or separated service members have a family member or friend who has been forced to leave a job to care for a veteran full-time, according to the 2007 report issued by the [President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors](#)

. To help these caregivers meet the many hardships and sacrifices often associated with the lengthy recovery and rehabilitation of veterans, this bill provides caregivers with vital assistance and support, including education on how to be a better caregiver; counseling and mental health services to deal with the stresses and rigors of veterans' care; and respite care for family and other caregivers of all veterans. The legislation also provides healthcare coverage and a service stipend for caregivers living with wounded veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The bill also makes historic improvements to VA healthcare services for the 1.8 million servicewomen that have bravely served our country. In an effort to provide more efficient and effective healthcare services to servicewomen returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, the legislation directs the VA to commission a study on likely health consequences faced by women veterans who have served in either Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom. In addition, newborn children of women veterans will now receive up to seven days of care, and VA treatment will be enhanced for women who have experienced sexual trauma while serving.

Additionally, to help veterans living in rural areas access the healthcare services they need, the legislation expands transportation services to and from VA hospitals and clinics provided by local Veterans Service Organizations by offering reimbursements for this travel at the rate of 41.5 cents per mile.

Congressman Boyd has helped provide an unprecedented level of support and services to our troops and veterans since first coming to Washington. Over the past few years alone, he has taken a number of actions on behalf of our servicemen and women, including:

- Helping to pass the largest funding increase in the VA's 77-year history, resulting in better care for veterans and those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Securing \$13 million for a new veterans outpatient clinic in Tallahassee that will provide expanded primary care and mental health services for veterans in our area;

- Ensuring military reservists aren't forced to take a pay cut when called up to active duty by providing small businesses with a tax credit to help cover the costs of employees called to service;
- Fighting for the new GI Bill, which provides veterans with educational benefits to cover housing, tuition, and books.
- Opening a community-based outpatient clinic in Marianna that will serve 1,500 North Florida veterans with basic primary care. In addition, Congressman Boyd recently announced the creation of another outpatient clinic to be built in Taylor County.
- The legislation now heads back to the Senate before being sent to the President for his signature.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 21, 2010

CONTACT:

Christopher Cashman, 202-225-5235